

**The
Business
of the
Month**

WH Cornerstone Investments

William & Paula Harris, Owners

Give a brief description of your business.

WH Cornerstone Investments is a Duxbury-based registered investment advisory firm. The firm is owned and run by the husband and wife team, of Paula and Bill Harris. WH Cornerstone is in the business of providing financial advice rather than selling products. We help our clients find solutions to their complex financial problems. We have developed a niche in advising on inherited pension and IRA assets.

How long have you been in business?

Fourteen years.



Bill and Paula Harris of WH Cornerstone Investments.

How did you get started?

Bill started his career in custody and investment operations for large institutional clientele; let's call them Wall Street Firms. It was an eye opening "behind the scenes" account of how mutual fund industry operated. It wasn't pretty. Frustrated by the amount of "hidden" fees, lack of transparency, and complete lack of empathy to the end consumer, WH Cornerstone Investments was launched. Originally, the firm was created to offer customized stock portfolios with low expenses and complete transparency in the investment process. The firm has evolved offering customized advisory services for complex situations. Paula joined the firm seven years ago after a very successful career in recruiting and human resources for financial service and consulting firms.

We've built the business one client at a time. We value each relationship that we have. We are authentic, thoughtful straight shooters providing sound, visionary advice.

What should people know about you and your business?

We started our firm from scratch as a Registered Investment Advisor. We are beholden to our client rather than some Wall Street firm. We are legally bound as fiduciaries to act in the best interest of our client every time rather than providing "suitable" advice, which is what is required of most brokers.

We provide our services for a fee rather than by commission.

Bill is a Certified Financial Planner. He is hardwired to think holistically about each client's financial life. In addition, Paula is a trained in a really cool assessment tool called Kolbe. We use the Kolbe Index in our business to gain a deeper understanding of how our clients learn, communicate and like to get things done. It helps us tailor how we work together to ensure the most success in our client relationship.

What is the best business advice you ever received?

Hire slowly. Fire quickly. It's applicable to employees, vendors and clients.

Tell us a memorable story about your business.

We had been working with a family business for many years managing their 401(k) program and providing financial advice to three of generations, including the matriarch of the family who started the business. Family members worked side-by-side on a daily basis but never really spoke about the future of the business. We were able to orchestrate several family meetings where we had multiple generations of a family

business discuss where they saw the future of the business going. In the end, they decided to sell the business to a third party for a nice profit at the top of the market. Today, they are all enjoying the lives they envisioned because they were finally able to talk through what meant the most to them.

For WH Cornerstone, family meetings have become a common venue.

Tell us about a mistake you made in business. What did you learn from it?

When the firm first started, we spent a lot of money on advertising without building a brand first. We threw away a lot of money on radio advertisements. We learned that the best way to build a business like ours is by building personal relationships. We do that by networking, volunteering for leadership positions in our community and by providing

personalized service to our clients. Social media has been a big help as well.

If you could wave a magic wand and make any change in your industry that you wanted, what would it be?

Too often, the client is not the center of the relationship with the firm but rather just a means to a profit. The industry needs to rethink the client relationship.

What's the best thing about your job?

We help our clients achieve financial peace of mind. We control our own destiny. We have created a business that takes care of our needs while allowing us the opportunity to give back to the community in which we live, work and play. We are both active in many organizations including the Plymouth Philharmonic, Mayflower RSVP, South Shore

Chamber of Commerce, and South Coastal Workforce Investment Board. Bill sits on the Duxbury Finance Committee, and is chair of Duxbury Republican Town Committee. Paula is a Trustee of the Duxbury Free Library.

So, how's business these days, anyway?

Business has been excellent. We are seeing more people that understand the value of customized advice. With the collapse or consolidation of so many of the brokerage houses and Wall Street firms clients are seeking out an objective third party advisor who puts the clients needs before their firms needs.

Visit their Web site at www.whcornerstone.com. Paula and Bill Harris can be reached by phone at (781) 934-9154 or (888) 797-9009.